



JANUARY 20th to 24th



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Official Souvenir Booklet of Blackball Centennial



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BLACKBALL CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE — 1965



Back row (left to right): R. A. Bowkett, J. Leishman, R. Neilson, L. Allen, S. Naylor, W. Scholefield, A. Kennedy.
 Middle row: Mrs G. Maguigan, T. Smith, E. Smith, N. Shadbolt, L. Biddulph, P. Kerr, E. Naylor, E. Mountford.
 Front row: Mrs Faddis, D. Matthews, J. R. Williams (President), D. McFadyen (Secretary), M. McFadyen, B. Webb.

FOREWORD

The publication of this souvenir of Blackball Centenary Year, opening on January 2, 1966, has two main objectives: To present a summary of the birth of Blackball as a township and to recall the indomitable spirit of our pioneer forebears, whose efforts established the foundation of the splendid heritage we now enjoy. We remember with gratitude those efforts, and enter upon the festivities in a spirit of humility and thanks to God for the bountiful past. Looking forward into the future, we realise that the younger generation will have many problems. Coal and timber, our main assets, are facing a recession.

We are proud of the achievements of the first century and can only face the future with hopeful spirits, taking an example from our intrepid pioneers, who blazed the trails that the miners followed.

It is, therefore, the intention of all in Blackball to make our Centenary Year a memorable one.

We will celebrate in a spirit of carnival, and it is our earnest hope that we will have the pleasure of the company of many people from outside our boundaries, particularly those whose grandparents or great-grandparents played a part in the history of Blackball.

Visitors are welcome, and I am certain they will enjoy the traditional hospitality of the West Coast people, and take away with them the remembrance of happy days of the festivities of our Centennial Year.

EDITOR.

1966.

*Compiled by A. Bowkett, Blackball, and Printed by the
Greymouth Evening Star Co. Ltd.*

There'll Always be a Blackball

There'll always be a Blackball,
Though we've no busy street,
You'll get a smile from everyone
Wherever we shall meet.

Our snow-capped hills are beautiful,
Our bush is lovely too,
Our neighbours kind and friendly,
There's a welcome here for you.

They want to take our living,
To close our busy mines,
To move away our neighbours
And leave us here to pine.

So here's a toast to Blackball
And those who by us stand,
We'll raise a flag in Blackball,
Our lovely West Coast land.

—Mrs E. Airey, Main Road, Blackball.



SUGAR LOAF HILL, BLACKBALL

**EXECUTIVE OFFICERS, BLACKBALL CENTENNIAL
COMMITTEE**



Back row: J. Leishman, R. Neilson (Trustees).

Front row: A. Bowkett (Treasurer), J. R. Williams (President),
D. McFadyen (Secretary).

Absent: Mrs T. Mason (Joint Secretary).

BIRTH OF BLACKBALL

In the history of Westland no town has had such a rise and fall as the township of Blackball.

Blackball was named after an old English company called the "Blackball Shipping Line." This company acquired the lease of areas of land on the west bank of the Grey River, north of Brunner, in order that they could later use the coal—just discovered—for their own ships.

The discovery of coal, however, did not herald the birth of Blackball, as the gold rush in the Moonlight district in 1864-65 was the beginning.

In November, 1865, a nugget of gold was found in what was to be later called Blackball Creek.

There was no real rush, however, until 1866, when gold in payable quantities was found in upper Blackball Creek. This area was then known as Garden Gully, but as the richness of the field grew, it became known as Croesus.

As the number of diggers in the field increased, so did the difficulties of supplying them with food.

The Plateau (later to be known as Blackball) was used as an over-night stop in the two-day journey from Greymouth. Huts and small store-sheds gradually formed the nucleus of a township.

And so Blackball was born.

One of our earliest traders was a Mr W. Kinsella, who took over the role of butcher, grocer, and also ferryman over the Grey River. When the first Post Office was opened on 1st February, 1888, Mr Kinsella was made Postmaster. The descendants of Mr Kinsella are living in the town today.

BLACKBALL CENTENNIAL QUEEN — 1966



MISS MARY BRYAN

BLACKBALL CENTENNIAL QUEEN CONESTANTS



From right: Misses Mary Bryan (chosen Queen), Joyce Smith, Aloma Buchanan, Gail Quibell, Valma Mayne, Cheryl Roberts, Joan Bisset, Alexia Macdonald (runner-up).

BLACKBALL CREEK REEFS

For a number of years prior to 1889 it was known that quartz reefs occurred in the gorge of Blackball Creek, but it was not until that year that any of them were found to be auriferous, when a little precious metal was discovered in a large formation outcropping on the western bank of the creek about half a mile above its confluence with Smoke-Oh Creek.

At first the values in the stone were not considered payable, but a little later the reef was traced to the eastern bank of the Creek.

Gold values seemed to show a material improvement, and the Minerva Gold Mining Company was formed in 1890 to further test the discovery.

Crushing was commenced, and continued until 1894, during which 2,460 tons of quartz were crushed from the mine for a yield of 771oz of gold, valued at £2,987/12/6.

In 1897 Harry Neilson found auriferous quartz in the Garden Gully-Croesus area. The Croesus Gold Mining Company was formed and a battery erected in 1899. Crushing operations went on until 1902 for a yield of 2,655oz 10dwt of gold, valued at £10,785/16/8.

The population of the Croesus and Blackball Creek areas in the 1880 to 1902 years fell from 303 diggers to 187. Two hotels, one at Garden Gully and one about two miles down on the Flat, catered for the always-thirsty diggers.

COAL

While gold was foremost in the minds of most of the population of Westland, our other main asset, coal, had been mined at Brunner, and the seams of coal in the Paparoa Ranges were being investigated.

The Blackball Coal Company was promoted in 1884 by Mr Joseph Kilgour after reading Mr C. Napier Bell's report on the area.

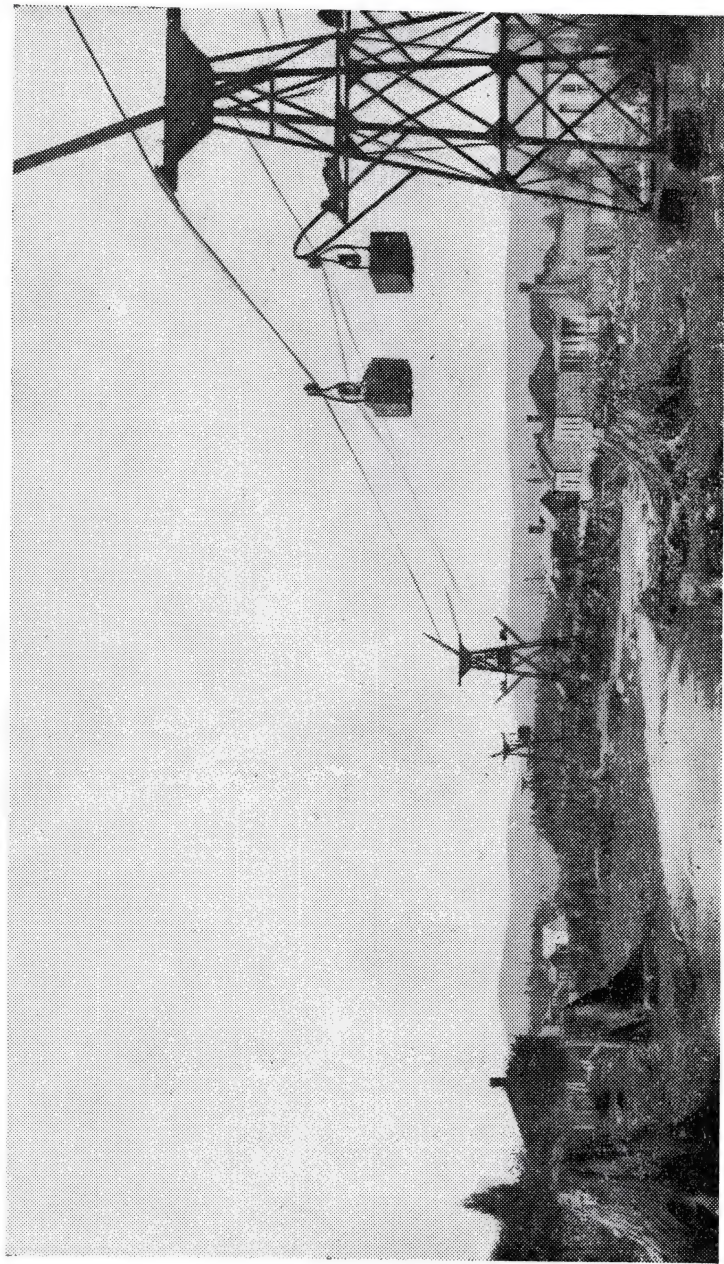
However, it was not until 1889 that it was really decided to push on with all the plans. In April, 1889, the Blackball Coal Company held a meeting in Warners Hotel, Christchurch, and Mr Kilgour, of Greymouth, the largest shareholder, laid before the meeting plans of a survey line from the mine to the completed portion of the Midland Railway. Mr A. B. Lindop, mining engineer, gave a satisfactory report of the survey of the mine. By October, 1890, the tunnel to the old Blackball seam was in 940ft, and by November 5, 1890, coal was struck by Mr Lindop, who had been appointed mine manager.

By April, 1891, the Blackball Coal Company reached the goal for which they had been working so long. They had gone through their main seam of coal, which was about 12 feet thick, but of almost unlimited extent otherwise. There was a layer of excellent fireclay on top of the main seam. Lying on the stratum of the fireclay was an upper seam of coal 4 to 5 feet thick of the same hard quality as the main seam.

The Company, having by this time proved the mine, was then faced with the next step of transporting the coal. It was decided to erect a wire-rope aerial tramway from the mine to Ngahere.

By August, 1893, the aerial tramway was nearing completion. At this time there were two ways of reaching the Grey River en route to Blackball from Ngahere. There were two tramways, one a private tramway constructed by Mr McInnes, and the other a tramway belonging to the Blackball Coal Company. At the Grey River there were three ferries: Mr McInnes, Mr Sonny Boy O'Brien, and a Mr Ross. From the ferries there were two tracks to Blackball, one along the aerial tramway, and the other over Blackball Creek, passing Mr Kinsella's store at the bottom of the plateau. The track continued up the hill through an avenue of birch trees.

AERIAL ROPEWAY FROM BLACKBALL TO NGAHERE OPENED 1893 — CLOSED 1909



This ropeway carried all the coal produced at Blackball during these years. It cost £29,000 to build.

There were huts along the track, lived in by Chinese who had been working payable gold claims for some years. Near the mine a new hotel, owned by Mrs Tom Jolliffe, had been built. This hotel was called "Jolliffetown."

At this time there were 27 men employed—13 at the mine and 14 on the track for the aerial ropeway. The ropeway was being erected under the supervision of Mr Gorner, who had been sent out from Germany by the firm of Adolph Bleickert and Company.

The aerial tramway, a distance of three miles, was opened for work on October 23, 1893. On the initial run, 200 tons of coal were sent over. The prospects of the Company were rosy at this time, as markets for 100,000 tons of coal a year had been found. (Blackball coal output in 1905 totalled 64,713 tons.)

As the years rolled on, the toll of wear and tear of the aerial ropeway was making it costly to run, and pressure was brought to bear for a bridge over the Grey River and an extension of the railway to Blackball.

On February 18, 1902, the first pile for the bridge was driven. (See photo.) Cost of bridge, £25,000.

By 1905 good progress had been made with the railway to Blackball, but a large flood, on June 24, 1905, proved disastrous, and the whole of the approach, right from the bank to the terminus of the bridge—about a year's work of 12 chains—was completely washed away.

The railway was finally completed in 1909, and the Blackball Coal Company ceased using the aerial in 1909, after 16 years in existence.

With the advent of the railway, the township of Blackball really started to boom. The march of time seemed to quicken the tempo of its inhabitants. From then on, the industrial trials and tribulations that were to become symbolic of the West Coast, seemed to develop in the town of Blackball.

In 1904 the State Miners' Union was formed at Runanga by Robert Semple, a Socialist from Australia. From this union a branch was later formed at Blackball. Then, in 1908, led by P. H. Hickey and P. C. Webb, a coal mines strike for better conditions and wages had its birth in Blackball.

The success of this strike was the turning point in New Zealand industrial history, for it gave publicity to the doctrines of a Socialist labour movement that finally led to the birth of the New Zealand Labour Party in 1910.

It is also interesting to note that in our Centennial Year, 1866-1966, Roa township, or Paparoa, will be sixty years old on December 1, 1965. The Paparoa Coal Mining Company

BLACKBALL RAILWAY STAFF, 1927



Back row (left to right): T. Lamberton, sen. (guard), T. Lamberton, jun. (fireman), C. Moorhouse (driver), G. Brunton (S.M.).

In front: J. Connors (driver), Frank Moore (clerk).

The two in the middle row cannot be identified.

was filed with the Register of Joint Stock Companies, Wellington, on December 22, 1905, with a capital of 100,000 shares of £1 each, to acquire for a term of sixty-six years a Crown leasehold of 1000 acres, situated on Mount Davy, Paparoa Range, at an altitude of 1500 feet above sea level and about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Blackball. The field comprised six seams of coal with average thicknesses of 5ft, 10ft, and 10ft 6in.

The quality of the coal, said the Government Analyst in 1905, "is somewhat remarkable. Seams No. 1, 2, and 3 are practically smokeless, and are of a low sulphur content, less than one per cent. Seams 1 to 6 have a sulphur content as follows: No. 1, 0.37; No. 2, 0.23; No. 3, 0.26; No. 4, 0.28; No. 5, 0.29; No. 6, 0.19."

The coal was ideal for smelting furnaces in the production of steel, and also being practically smokeless, the coal was ideal for domestic use, especially in large industrial cities.

In 1905, with its railway and two coal mines, Blackball, as an industrial town, could look forward to a bright future.

Even so, an abundance of wealth in gold and coal still does not help to hold and stabilise a township. Only its inhabitants can do this, by their work, their social habits, and their desire to help one another.

In those early years Blackball did not lack a mutual bond, everyone depending on each other.

Mr W. Kinsella, after his duties as ferryman and Postmaster, built a hotel to care for the thirsty inhabitants. Mr Dave Kidd and his wife started a butcher shop at the top end of Blackball, later shifting to the centre of the town. Mrs Kidd, aged 91 years, is still very active and alert at her daughter's residence in Blackball today.

Although it was in 1909 that coal-carrying commenced on the new railway line, it was not until August, 1910, that the line was ready for passenger traffic, and it was in that month that the first passenger train left the township—a gala occasion.

BLACKBALL MINE MANAGERS

Men who held important positions in the production of coal were the various mine managers: Messrs J. Leitch, W. Leitch, G. Davidson, J. Watson, W. Parsonage, J. Hughes, J. Quinn, L. Cook, G. Keown, P. Peattite, J. Rarity, J. Turner, E. Holm, and N. Forsyth.

In the Paparoa Mine, Mr Alphonsus O'Donnell was manager for many years, and was well known throughout the coal mining fields.

DRIVING THE FIRST PILE ON BLACKBALL BRIDGE — FEBRUARY 18, 1902. COST OF BRIDGE £25,000.



The site for the bridge was officially opened by the then Prime Minister of New Zealand, the Rt. Hon. Richard Josn Seddon (centre).

EARLY BUSINESSMEN

Mr Burt and his good wife went farming on the Brunner track, about four miles from Blackball, and provided the township with milk and meat, as did old Bill Neilson on the flat at Blackball Creek.

A good many will remember Ah Wee, an old Chinese, and his hunchback helper, who grew vegetables and supplied the town, first by carrying them on a long pole with two baskets, then later by horse and cart.

Mr Geo. Brown, the butcher, had his shop on the main track—later to become the road—until he shifted it up to the centre of the town. His son, Alan Brown, a boy of 12 years, with meat packed in a bag and slung over a saddle, was packman to Middle Flat, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles away. He also packed up the Croesus track, a full day's journey. Young Alan used to say that his horse was a racehorse. It had to be, to keep ahead of the flies!

When a digger complained of maggots on his meat, Alan said: "Sorry, Dig, beaten in the race to your place by race-horse flies."

Mr Kinsella's son, Johnny, built the water-race running parallel with Blackball Creek. His only instruments were three boning rods, picks, shovels, and dynamite. The uniform grade of such a project around a heavily wooded and high area is an engineering feat of no mean order.

As the town grew, timber was required, and Con Daly, Jack Hahn, and others supplied the township with this valuable commodity. Con Daly's sawmill was sited at Ford's Creek, on the Brunner track, about half a mile from Ah Wee's market garden.

Then there was McNeil's goats—large, white ones, who annoyed everyone, but always got home to be milked at 5 o'clock—that is, if some of them had not been milked by irate neighbours who had lost their cabbages. And old Mr R. Glasson (all the men-folk were referred to as old so-and-so on account of having beards and whiskers): He kept bees and established an apiary, which is still run today by his son and grandsons.

The Dumbleton family baked the daily bread, and Jim Bertie was the other baker. They, by their efforts and labours, provided the staff of life for the growing town of Blackball.

As a boy, I used to like to stir the mincemeat in an old cast-iron boiler hung over an open fire, then ladle the contents into the pie casts that Bertie had made.



SNOW IN BLACKBALL



GERRAGHTY'S BOARDINGHOUSE

Jack Hartshorne, who delivered the bread, pies, and sponges, had to be quick with his horse and cart in those days, as he always had the dogs and West Coast weather to contend with. I remember Jack saying: "Good job I had a few extra bags today. When I put a basket of sponges down by Haisty's store, I had only turned my back, when I looked around, and three dogs had just cocked their legs over the bags of sponges. I quickly transferred the sponges to other bags. Poor Bertie was later blamed for changing the flavour of his goods."

Armstrong and Haisty had the big store in the 1913 era. They sold horseshoes, nails, picks, shovels, stores, and canned goods of every description. The children would gaze in awe at lengths of string coming out of two large buckets hung to the high ceiling and falling on to the counter to be used for tying parcels.

Old Mr Haisty and his girls gave good service and helped many a family in time of trouble. Armstrong and Haisty, later known as Haisty's Store, gave employment to a good number of girls and young men, who in turn branched out themselves and founded grocery shops in other parts of New Zealand.

A keen ear as well as quick wit was required in those days. Young Jack Haisty found that out to his embarrassment, when one day a lady, who was toothless, came into the store and asked for bun papers. Jack then placed before her a roll of toilet paper. "No," said the lady. "Bun papers I want!" As Jack opened his mouth to extol the virtues of a new amenity just on the market, his Dad quickly produced a packet of cake bun papers. And so young Jack learnt No. 1 lesson carefully.

1913 STRIKE

In 1913, with war looming up on the European front, the coal trade was booming. Blackball mine was producing 1000 tons of coal a day. Conditions were still not to the liking of the miners, and so Blackball's second big strike, known as the "Tucker-time Strike," closed the mine.

The Miners' Union had gained strength, not only in numbers but in funds, so they were able to hold out, and their demands were met, but only after a huge loss of man hours and wages.

Here, too, we record the story of the miners being brought before the Court and fined for striking. All the men refused to pay the fines, and as there were too many for the local gaols to accommodate, the Government authorities called in the Bailiff to seize their household furniture and auction it all to pay the fines.

On the day of the sale, only the head of the Workers' Union did any bidding, and bought all the articles without any counter-bids, so that the poor return of £7/2/11 at the auction sale did not realise enough to pay the fines of five miners, let alone 150. This brought an end to the strike, with victory concessions to the coal miners.

WORLD WAR ONE

Early in 1914 many miners and young men left the mines at Blackball and Roa to go overseas to fight in the Armed Forces, and some paid the supreme sacrifice.

The Honours List of men who lost their lives in the 1914-18 War comprised:

Charlie Wootton
Jamieson Jolly
Charlie Turk
Harry Corrie
Bill Arnott
Chas. Roaders
Sam Whyte

Up to 1918, work was constant. Coal was an urgent fuel and the mines worked three shifts a day, six days a week.

But before the war ended, in November, 1918, Blackball, along with the rest of the world, was struck by the "great 'flu." Healthy men and women died within three or four days after contracting the plague. The Miners' Union "Maori pa" was turned into a hospital, and miners like Hunter Ritchie, Arnold Knowles, Vincent Cruse, J. White, and others laboured as male nurses under Dr Telford to save many lives. Sulphur was burnt on shovels of hot embers in all homes in the area, and Dr Telford chain-smoked whilst attending to his patients. It was discovered later that cigarette smokers did not contract the disease like a non-smoker. It is on record that one miner, hale and hearty, said to Dr Telford, "Give me something for the 'flu." Doc told him to get to hell and get drunk. So Tom took his advice and continued drunk and sober for over a month. He is alive and well to this day to tell the tale. Canterbury.

SCOTTISH IMMIGRANTS

There was quite a recession in the coal trade in the early twenties, but in 1926 it revived, and a good many immigrants from Scotland and England came out to New Zealand and settled in Blackball. The "Poms," as they were called, brought the population to 1500 inhabitants.

With more Clarks, Meikles, McNeils, Doyles, Andersons, Boyles, Lowes, and many others, the famous Blackball Highland Pipe Band was formed.

Blackball then became the proud possessor of two bands, as its brass band was formed early in 1917, led by Tony Mason.

These two bands were to perform at such functions as the annual miners' picnic at Cass Square, Hokitika, or at Lake



FIRST PASSENGER TRAIN OUT OF BLACKBALL — 1910

Mahinapua. Travel was by train. The early arrivals at the station obtained seats in carriages, and the rest travelled in tarpaulin-covered wagons. For weeks the children would be busy building wooden windmills to fly out of the windows of the train.

Ah Wee and his fruit cart would always be on hand at the station selling his wares before the train left. Tom Lamberton and the station staff could handle 1000 adults and children, and pack them in like sardines. Old Tom, or "Walrus" as he was affectionately known, would proudly blow his whistle, bellow "All aboard," then say, "To hell with you if you fall off." Strange to say, he never lost a passenger. On the way home he often left a few behind, as they were too drunk to find the train. These would roll home two or three days later.

Many would remember (especially those in the back half of the train) the long wait as old Tom and his assistants split the train in half, as the steep grade was too much for the two engines to haul in one unit. Half-an-hour later the engines would arrive back for the second half-train.

Looking back at the leisurely 30-mile-per-hour rate in those days, and our present pace of 55 miles per hour on the road, there is little wonder our old folk mutter "Time marches on."

Every Sunday morning in those days, the wailing of the bagpipes in various parts of the township sounded like a yearning note for their homeland Scotland. Today, to get the same effect, a wee "drap" of the old Scotch whisky does the trick.

Many of the miners, on that day of rest, would breast the bar of Mrs Campbell's Dominion Hotel in the morning, and later adjourn to the local football field to watch and jeer the home side. Survivors of visiting teams who played Blackball on their home ground will never forget the women barrackers, who produced hatpins when there were scrums near the line, or hook an umbrella around the leg of a Marist winger who was hot-footing it to the line for a score.

Old "Gummy" Leitch would mutter and yell at the referee: "Send the B—— off!" Then call back at the referee: "No, not the players, get off yourself, you idiot." Then the "Poms" would yell: "Oo dahn nah, Blahkboil. Let 'im oop. Oo dahn nah, Greemooth. Kick 'im in t goots."

Young Doddsie, Nuttall, Huddy or Bill Allen's play would be praised, or told to go home, depending on their play. If play was not up to standard, most of the men spectators would move over to a gravel pit on the edge of the Domain, and a good old game of two-up would take place.

GOLD SEEKERS

The miners in those days worked hard, lived hard, and gambled hard—at least, when they had the money. During a lock-out in the mine in 1931, followed by the “great depression,” little work was to be had, and “on the dole” was the main occupation. Gold digging was resumed, and numerous claims were pegged around Blackball, Faversham, and Roa. Returns were small in some claims, but Lady Luck played no small part in the future of others.

Old Harry Marsden, hanging out his washing one day, dropped a peg, stooped to pick it up, and found a 1½oz gold nugget lying where the peg fell. He worked the ground and recovered another 11oz 22dwt. Sid Lester, at Faversham, found gold in clay on the hillside, puddled the clay in his bare feet with water, then ran it all through a sluice-box.

Early in the 1930's, when the Labour Government came into power, it gave a spark of hope to the township. Blackball was always a strong Labour front, and with Paddy Webb, Bob Semple, and his colleagues, the miners knew that it was only a matter of time and the Government would nationalise the mining industry.

A Government gold subsidy was granted—14/- a week to single men and 25/- a week to married men.

Rab Clark, a Blackball County Councillor for many years, was appointed as Gold Supervisor for the West Coast, and men were sent out in parties to Upper Moonlight, Croesus Track, and Garden Gully.

Mr Bob Mountford, affectionately known as “Bobby Bingo,” was supervisor of work on the Croesus Track to keep this old gold trail open and facilitate the packing of supplies to diggers in Garden Gully and upper Blackball Creek. Gold came into its own again and many were the tales of strikes, etc.

Even “Jockey” Moore, digging a lavatory shaft, struck gold, only to find later that it had been “salted” by some of his cobbers with brass filings.

Sunday comes again, the town is awakened by the wailing of the bagpipes, the unemployed miners, later in the day, in groups around the township, would discuss some of their problems or tell their stories. Men like Steve Blair and Mick Connors kept their mates in suspense on what they would do next. Like all others, Steve and Battling Mick had a claim in German Gully, and at that time a lot of tools were reputed to have been stolen from the Blackball Mine. These tools were branded B.B.C. (Blackball Coal Company). The local constable

was ordered to go out amongst the men working gold claims and endeavour to catch and prosecute some of the people responsible. He did apprehend one or two men, and eventually arrived in German Gully. Finding two picks, a crowbar, and two shovels, marked B.B.C., in Steve's claim, and pick and axe in Bertie Billett's, the law-man said: "Got you with the goods, boys." But Steve replied: "That's our brand: Billett, Blair and Connors. We had to brand our own tools, as there were too many thieving b——s around."

As Joe McIvor, the un-elected Mayor of Croesus, used to say, "There is gold in those hills, and plenty for all, if you would only bend your elbow." Joe died in 1965, aged between 86 and 90 years, and was one of Nature's gentlemen. He loved the bush, the green valleys, and Nature's gold, which he sought all his life. When he filled his poke he would hit town, pay his bills, fill up with tucker and booze, go along to the Caledonian dance for an hour or two, recite his favourite Australian poem, "Lost," then leave the hall around 2 o'clock in the morning to make his way back to his camp over eight miles away. Quite often he would be found sleeping on the side of the bush track, white with frost. The toughness of those old diggers was remarkable.

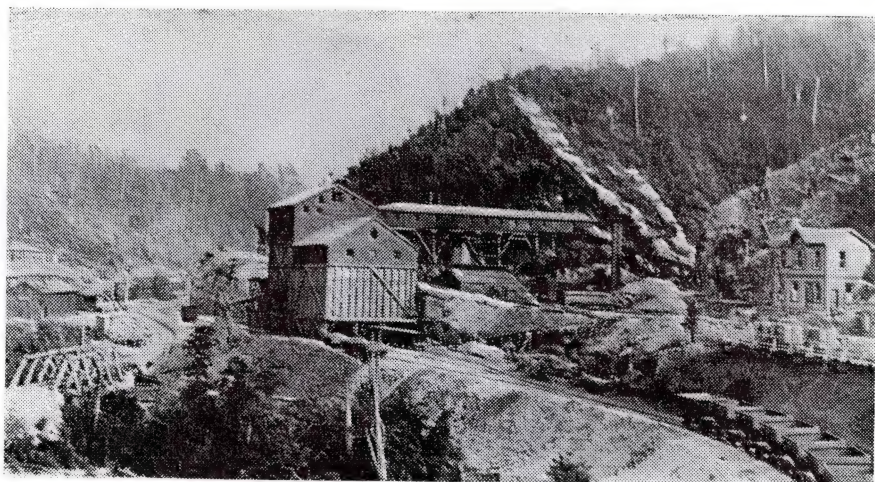
During the dredging boom in the 30's, the Argo Dredge, working in Blackball Creek, and the big Ngahere Dredge, working on Aynsley's Flat, won considerable quantities of gold. The Argo was one of the most successful Coast dredges.

NATIONALISATION OF MINES

Then came that great day in 1932, when Paddy Webb and Angus McLagan addressed a public meeting on the Blackball Domain.

Paddy told the people that the Labour Government would nationalise the mining industry and that they had bought Blackball. The time had come when they would get full employment. As Paddy said: "We will give you a job; we will buy you the tools to work; we will transport you to your jobs; we will buy your clothes or boots if you are without the necessary garments; and we will"—(voice in the background: "Take it off our pay.") And Paddy, quickly: "Why not?"

This turning point in the town's history brought full employment, better wages and conditions. Young men could save money, and marry the girls of their choice. Many did this, and the population increased by 20 per cent. Others strengthened their home ties by remodelling and painting their homes, and Blackball took on an air of prosperity. The mining township settled down to a period of stability and gay times. Even laughter could be heard at its most solemn moments.



BLACKBALL BINS — 1910

COMMUNITY EFFORT—WATER COMES TO BLACKBALL



WORKING BEE, MAIN ROAD

ANECDOTES AND PERSONALITIES

But Granny Kerr was worried. She still could not marry off her last son Stewart. But Stewart used to say: "No, Mum, there is not a woman in the land who could do for me what you have done." He knew that very soon he would be able to repay her, for as the years had rolled by, Gran was starting to feel her age of 75 years. The tragedy of old age is loneliness and to be forgotten.

Stewart, born to blush unseen, did not waste his great gift—that of charity "to the old." Even today he still tends the lawns and fuels the fires of the aged.

One Sunday morning, when Arnold was conducting the service at the local Presbyterian Church and reading the lesson, he noticed some children walking along the top of the paling fence. All of a sudden he stopped reading, and in the silence that fell, exclaimed: "I knew the little bu—— would fall!" as one child slipped and went over.

A good many would remember Riddiford's shop, near the hotel. As boys on our way to Sunday School, we would club together, six at a time, invest 3d of our Sunday School money on two-a-penny Gob-Stoppers, change the other 3d into half-pennies, and place one half on the plate. Sucking time on that line of lolly was two hours. So there was little wonder at the tuneless voices singing hymns.

A passing reference to Mamie Watson and her band of willing helpers, Lu Campbell, Dad Kerr, Frank Meadowcroft, and Bummy Kerr, who provided and organised the social entertainment of the township, is opportune. The proceeds from these various social gatherings were mostly donated to the school, swimming baths, or some worthy charitable cause.

But when Smacker McDonald, a local bulldust artist, arrived home from fishing one evening carrying a small fallow deer over his shoulder and his rod and line in his hand, we had something of worldwide interest. Bob was Blackball's first man to catch a deer on a fly fishing rod. He said, as he cast his line, it fell over a blackberry bush, and, when reeling in, felt a tug, and the deer had been caught by the ear. So the locals, knowing Bob, scratched their heads and pondered. But Smacker had the deer, and on examination no bullet holes were in the body.

Humanity the world over has its blind eye, and the miners at Blackball were no exception. Some could not see daylight, even in a deep, dark, coal pit. One day a deputy tried to phone through to the end of the rope road, a long distance

off, from the weighbridge, and, being unable to get a reply, he trudged his way in. Arriving at the weighbridge, he attacked Doddsie for not answering the phone. Doddsie grabbed him by the arm and said "Look in there." He pointed to the phone, which was in pieces, and said: "That's why; the electrician is repairing the d—— thing." But old Morgan was not to be put off, for he exclaimed: "Why the hell didn't you ring me and tell me!"

In the Roa mine, a good many years ago, the men at the face asked Colin Cowan what was wrong because there had not been any skips coming in for some time. He replied that he had signalled the three rings to run the jig. Waiting a while, he gave three rings again, without getting any movement. So the deputy and Colin decided to climb the heading to find out what was wrong.

Reaching the top, they saw a race of skips, ready to lower, and Bill Harding standing at the wheel. The deputy, of course, asked Bill why he wasn't sending the race down. He replied that until he got the proper rings he would not operate. So Colin then protested, and said: "But, Bill, I have been ringing three bells." Bill replied: "I have only been getting two up here." Colin opened his mouth to protest again, when Bill said: "Well, one of the b——y rings must have hopped off on the way up!"

WORLD WAR TWO

Then, to cloud the sunshine of Blackball's prosperity, World War Two, in 1939, brought a change, and Blackball, like the rest of New Zealand, played its part in the war effort of the country. Many young men left to go overseas in the Air Force or as soldiers of the New Zealand Army. Some paid the supreme sacrifice with their lives: Joe Driscoll, Freddy Smith, Tim McFadyen, the Brown Bomber, A. Wakatu, and others.

Blackball is very proud that so many of its sons went as foot-soldiers, or took part in the war effort, many attaining high rank.

In the years 1942 to 1944, when the war in the Islands against the Japs was going badly for the Allies, the hardships of poverty, hunger and torture were summed up by the following words of an unknown soldier:—

*I sought my soul,
But my soul I could not see;
I sought my God,
But God eluded me;
I sought my brother,
And I found all three.*

As the Government placed restrictions on butter, tea, sugar, petrol, etc., the people in this area took it in their stride. Folk worked to make ends meet, and the miners worked harder to produce more coal for the war effort. A packet of tobacco was exchanged for 2lb butter, vouchers for petrol or extra tea, and so on.

In the next few war years life settled into that hum-drum existence of every-day affairs. Work in both coal mines was at high pressure, six days a week. The exception was rationing, but even this brought a touch of humour.

Tony the Italian was very sore and felt hurt—he could not understand the cut in petrol, thus having to leave his old bus in the shed, so he wrote to the Oil Fuel Controller asking for more petrol, but was turned down. He replied with the following letter:—

Sir,—Your letter tomorrow she come,
He tell me, I no getta petrola,
Enuf so me buggy she go broke.
I comma to dissa country 20 years ago,
And me a good British object.
I no Dago Bastar.
Never before I getta da insult
Like dis. You no giva no petrola
Only a little bit.
I go for tella you to sticka your bloddie
ase upa my petrola,
How you like dat.
I buya da horse and de carta
Pulla da blooda gig load
Mucha cheaper.
Maybe he farta in de carta,
But he no stinka like your
Blooda petrola.
So goodbuy
and Bugga me.

TONY DELMONICA.

After the war Blackball settled again into that quiet period of stability of work in the mines, gold dredges, and new timber mills. Young people leaving school could always obtain employment.

But if Blackball's outlook ebbed and flowed with vexing uncertainty throughout its history, its capacity to survive every recurring crisis became a notable part of its character. Character this town has always had; the sense of independence Blackball's workmen carried with them on this little plateau has been demonstrated in many ways, and, even in those days, the lengths to which the miners went in defence of the causes they held to be right would create sensations. (Crib-time strike, quoted earlier in booklet.)

Certainly Blackball will never be forgotten. Its sons and daughters know that when one door closes, another always opens. Who knows but that the coal that helped to warm the nation could some day soon be the coal that feeds the nation, and regain its throne as "King Coal."

But it was early in 1961 that King Coal was king-hit. The axe fell on Blackball, and the announcement by the Minister of Mines that the Blackball colliery was to cease production within two years was a bitter blow.

In its 72 years the Blackball mine had been a permanent wage-earner on the economic affairs of the West Coast. Its history, as we have tried to trace in this booklet, is pitted with the scars of industrial strife.

There was always the fight against spontaneous combustion and encroaching water. They were threats to development and production.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1964

So often has the sentence of death been pronounced on Blackball, so often has it been reprieved, that its complete erasure from the West Coast scene has never been thought a possibility. But today, Blackball, as a coal-mining producer, closed one of its doors—the front one. Blackball coal mine was sealed off and closed. Its back door and sister colliery, Roa, still carries on production on a reduced scale.

"FOR YOU"

*It's just a little town of no renown,
That brings back memories for you,
Of home and people you loved so well,
And times that were so true,
Of its valleys and creeks, and beautiful hills,
That will change no more for you,
But your memories will linger year by year
Of Blackball's love for you.*



ERIC MAGUIGAN

SPORTS

Blackball's sporting history on the West Coast is a proud and enviable one. Rugby League on the West Coast had its birthplace at Blackball on June 4, 1915, when a touring Canterbury side played a Blackball team. Canterbury won 23-10. Eventually, owing to players going to World War One, Rugby League lapsed and was not revived until 1919.

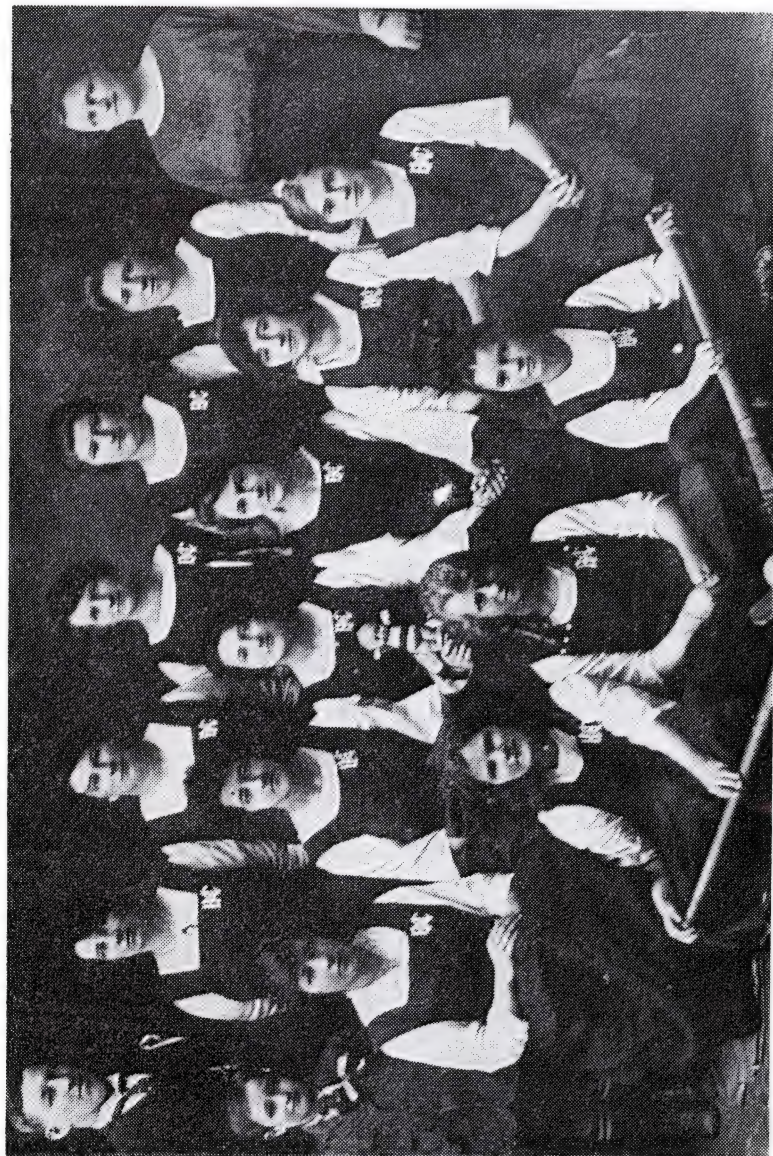
Blackball's first Kiwi representative was Johnny Dodds, who played for New Zealand as a first five-eighth on the tour to Australia in 1930.

One of the most outstanding achievements in the field of sport was by Eric Maguigan, of Blackball. His record in the sport of cycling in New Zealand is in world class. We are proud to honour his name and reproduce his record here:

Started racing 1945; 1st, 1 mile, St. Pat's Sports, 1946; 3rd, 2 mile Wheelrace, 1946; 1st and fastest, Grey-Blackball Sports, 1946; 1st and fastest, Grey-Blackball, 1949; 3rd and fastest, Grey-Blackball, 1947; 1st, Waimate-Christchurch, 1946, 135-mile N.Z. Championship; 3rd and 3rd fastest, 100-mile N.Z. Champ., 1946, New Plymouth; West Coast 25-mile Champion, 1948; most points road cycling, Grey Club, 1948-49-50-51; member of scratch team which broke 4hrs for 100 miles, first time in history, Timaru-Christchurch, 1948; Reefton Wheelrace, 1949; fastest time, Christchurch-Kaikoura, 1949, 120 miles; runner-up, N.Z. 25-mile, 1949; 75-mile N.Z. Champion, 1949; West Coast 25-mile Champion, 1950; 2nd fastest, Rangiora to Kaikoura, 1950; 50-mile Road Champion, Canterbury Centennial, 1950; 75-mile N.Z. Champion and new record, 1950; one-mile Nelson-Marlborough Track Champion, 1950; 10-mile Nelson-Marlborough Track Champion, 1950; cup winner for most points, Reefton Sports, 1950; Wheelrace winner, Reefton Sports, 1950; Wheelrace winner, Reefton Sports, 1949; runner-up N.Z. 25-mile, 1950; 100-mile N.Z. Champion and record-holder, 3hr 49min, 1951; 25-mile Champion, Blackball, 1951; runner-up Mid-Canterbury Road Champion, 1957; most points, New Year Sports, 1957; runner-up Canterbury Individual Pursuit, 1957; 3rd New Zealand Individual Pursuit, 1957; member of N.Z. Champion Pursuit Team, 1957, and record-holders; 50-mile Champion, South Canterbury, 1957; Mid-Canterbury Road Championship winner, 1958; member N.Z. Champion Pursuit Team, 1959; runner-up N.Z. Champion Individual Pursuit, 1959; 2nd Wheelrace, N.Z. Championships, 1959.

In hockey, Blackball has had top teams in both women's and men's competitions, and representatives of West Coast teams. In 1958, at 17 years, H. Aynsley toured Australia with

BLACKBALL'S FIRST HOCKEY TEAM — 1919



Back row: Harry Mettrick, Ethel Hill, Mrs Buchanan, Mrs Bowkett, Mary Lamberton, Olly Riddiford, Lou Robinscn.

Middle row: Kate Goodall, Jessie McDonald, Ella Matthews, Edie Stubbs, Jessie Pirrie, Elsie Whitehead,

Front row: Maud Kells, Doris Watson, Mary Jamieson.

the Maadi Cup Districts team. He was also captain of the Maadi Cup team to Australia in 1964—a grand record.

Bowling: Blackball, too, had its champions. In 1947, Jim Gourlay was second lead in the fours that won the New Zealand title. The team was: T. White (skip), Bill Hillhouse (lead), Jim Gourlay (second), J. Armstrong (third).

LEAGUE SPORT

Blackball has been a household word in Rugby League football ever since it was started on the West Coast. Among the notable players in the early years were the late Wattie Kirk and Tom Todd. The latter is still hale and hearty and lives at Dobson. It was in the early 1940's, when Blackball really shone, that they went to Auckland to play Manukau for the New Zealand Championship, but were beaten 23-11. However, their brilliant form, which was a great credit to their coach Johnny Dodds, continued until 1951, when they beat the Auckland champion team Mount Albert, at Auckland. In one season during this period 11 players from the Club were in the West Coast team.

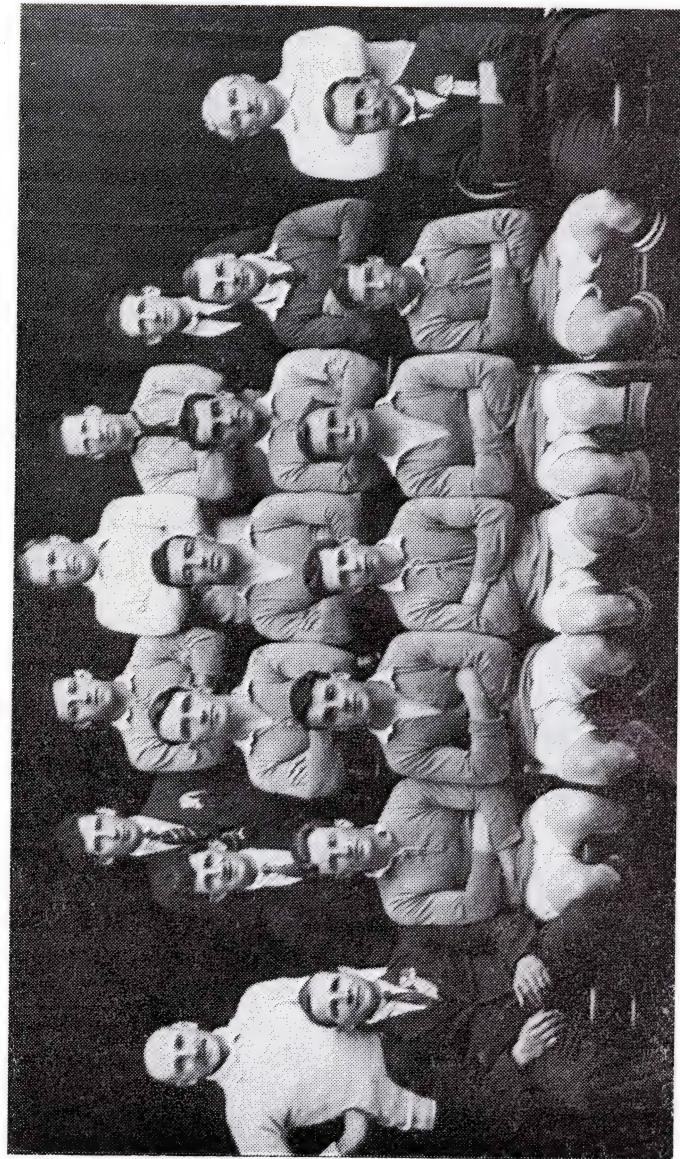
Johnny Dodds was a New Zealand selector in 1946, and three players, W. Mountford, R. Aynsley, and C. McBride, played for New Zealand against Great Britain. New Zealand won 13-8.

Our Johnnie, as the crowd called him, was a great draw-card, and many a game Blackball won by tactics and moves planned by Johnnie.

It was also in the 30's that a player by the name of Ces Mountford was first heard of. This Blackball player was to become one of New Zealand's most brilliant exponents of the game. It was regretted that he never played for his country. He was discovered by a Wigan scout, and went abroad and found fame quickly. He played for the famous Wigan and Warrington sides, and was often referred to as the "Boy Wonder from Down Under." In 1945 he set a West Coast record when he scored 227 points in the season—31 tries and 67 goals for Blackball.

In 1946 the West Coast team took the field at Victoria Park against Great Britain. Result: West Coast 17, Great Britain 8. This was a win that gave them their first and only international victory. Seven Blackball players took part in this great match: R. G. Nuttall, W. F. Mountford, P. K. Mountford, C. McBride, R. Aynsley, M. Ord, and J. McNaughton. Their win was something to be proud of, as the British side was only beaten in one other game, going under to New Zealand.

WESTLAND "SOCCER" ASSOCIATION FOOTBALL REPS.



Played against Chinese, at Greymouth, Sept. 17, 1924. Chinese 1, West Coast 1.

Back row: E. Croft (Reserve), H. Pickering, W. Parsonage, C. Hogg, T. Melvor (Reserve).
Middle row: W. Robson (Linesman), C. Quibell (Reserve), J. McNicol, J. Kissock (Captain), D. Gochrane,
I. Mossop (Linesman), H. Richie (Referee).

Front row: G. Bell (Trainer), A. Crompton, F. Clark, G. Brown, R. Marley, A. Winstanley,
E. Airey (Manager and President).

In the 1947-48 Kiwis, Blackball boys who represented New Zealand were R. Nuttall, K. Mountford, C. McBride, and R. Aynsley.

Bill McLennan was a strong, hard-working prop, who earned a name for himself as one of New Zealand's great forwards.

Charlie McBride was, and is still ranked as, the greatest second-row forward in the world—a tireless worker and deadly tackler.

Rob Aynsley, Bobby O'Donnell, Les McNicol, Ray Nuttall were all great players, who earned praise for their great football and sportsmanship.

And we must honour our latest Kiwi of 1965, Robin Scholefield, now overseas.

In the administration field of Rugby League, Blackball played a key part. Wattie Kirk, Harry Long, Warrior Kells, and later in the 1946-47 era, Mr B. F. Connors (President of West Coast Rugby League). Bernie was a proud man when he presented Blackball's four Kiwis in 1947-48 with a £50 note each before they went overseas—the first time the boys had ever seen one!

It is fitting at this time that we should remember all those who have played a part so nobly in the field of sport, and even though we may have omitted or overlooked some names, we trust that during Centennial Week numerous old associations will be renewed in the customary West Coast hospitable manner.

One hundred years is a long time in the life of a mining town on the West Coast, and many will be the memories awakened when old ex-residents and present old inhabitants—Jock White, 95 years; Jack Nuttall, 83 years; Granny Kidd, 91 years; Mrs Muir; Tas Turner, 82 years—and many others from away, assemble to celebrate this Centennial occasion.

Even when Blackball celebrated its School Jubilee in 1951, many were the happy reunions, and even then, when it rained, it still did not dampen the ardour of the celebrations, although one old miner was heard to remark: "Those damn Maoris, they knew what they were about when they sold the West Coast to the White-fella—they got the best of the bargain."

BLACKBALL'S LADY BOWLERS

Blackball's lady bowlers have had a proud record, as the following victories will testify:—

West Coast Singles, 1949-50: Mrs C. Brown.

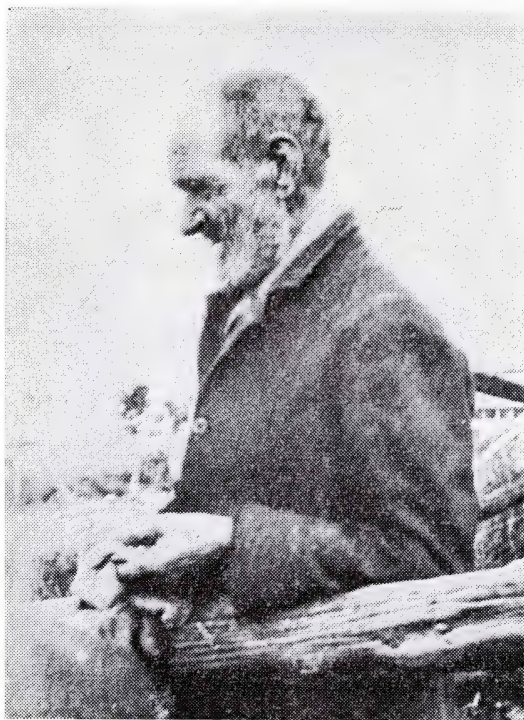
West Coast-Buller Singles, 1947-48: Mrs C. Brown.

West Coast Rinks.—1951-52: Mesdames M. Clark, L. Taylor, Brown, Walker (skip). 1955-56: M. Clark, K. Philip, R. Boyd, E. Knowles (skip).

Champion Pairs, 1956-57: Mrs M. Clark, Mrs E. Knowles (skip).

Champion Rinks, 1959-60: Mesdames J. Fleming, T. Patterson, C. Brown, M. Clark (skip).

West Coast Singles Champion, 1962-63: Mrs J. Fleming.

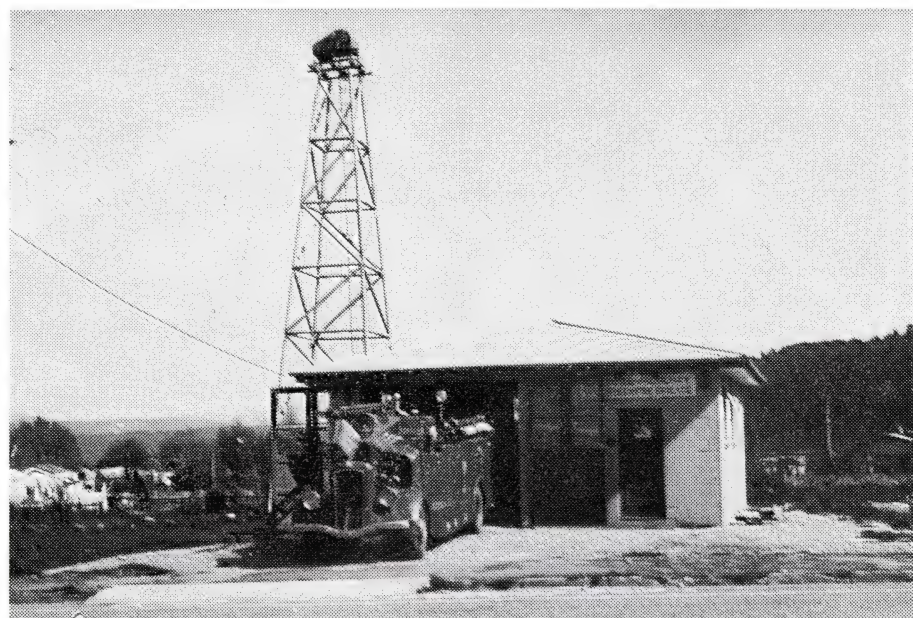


J. WHITE

Jack was renowned for drifting into the pubs, breasting the bar, and dipping his finger in anybody's beer that was handy—so that the offended person's drink soon became his.



BLACKBALL PRIMARY SCHOOL



BLACKBALL FIRE STATION

OFFICIAL PROGRAMME

Blackball Centennial

January 20th to January 24th, 1966

THURSDAY, JANUARY 20th

MARDI GRAS

MAIN STREET AREA OF BLACKBALL

Starting Time: 7.30 p.m.

Fun — Music — Games — Side-Shows — Mock Court
Old-time Police Guards.

9 p.m., CROWNING OF BLACKBALL CENTENNIAL QUEEN
"MISS MARY BRYAN"

PRINCESS, MISS ALEXIA MACDONALD

TORCH LIGHT PROCESSION

ADMITTANCE AT GATES:

ADULTS, 2/-; Children Free.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 21st

AFTERNOON: OLD TIME GET-TOGETHER.

EVENING: CENTENNIAL BANQUET, 8 p.m.

(Admission: Ticket Only)

Toastmaster:

MR R. J. WILLIAMS

Entertainment by Courtesy of
MR GEORGE O'GORMAN AND COLLEAGUES

SATURDAY, JANUARY 22nd

CENTENNIAL PROCESSION

Leaves Top of Mine Hill at 1.30 p.m.

led by Centennial Queen Float.

Gold Rush Bags obtainable on Blackball Domain.

Sports — Centennial Cycle Races — Athletics — Chopping —
Tug of War Teams — Marching Girls Display
and many Novelty Events.

Highland Pipe Band — Kokatahi Band

SATURDAY EVENING

CENTENNIAL BALL

BLACKBALL MINERS' HALL

Admission Ticket: 10/-.

NOTE—Ball commences sharp at 8 p.m.
Alec McIntyre and his Seven-Piece Band.

PRIZE FOR BELLE OF BALL — 1866.

(Old Time Long Frock)

BELLE OF BALL — 1966

(Dress Optional)

Prizes Best Dressed Old Time Couple.

Prize Best Dressed Old Lady.

Sit-Down Supper commences at 10 p.m.

SUNDAY CHURCH PARADE

Time 10.30 a.m.

AFTERNOON: MYSTERY PICNIC.

EVENING: SCREENING AT LOCAL THEATRE.

GOLD LEAF

the filter

that's got

the flavour!

